

Feminism: Demeaned by Association

by Ivy Bottini

"Women in the movement have in most cases gone to great lengths to avoid discussion and confrontation with the issue of lesbianism. It puts people up-tight. They are hostile, evasive, or try to incorporate it into some "broader issue. But it is no side issue. It is absolutely essential to the success and fulfillment of the women's liberation movement that this issue be dealt with. As long as the label "dyke" can be used to frighten women into a less militant stand, keep her separate from her sisters, keep her from giving primacy to anything other than men and family- then to that extent she is controlled by the male culture. Insofar as women want only more privileges within the system, they do not want to antagonize male power. They instead seek acceptability for women's liberation, and the most crucial aspect of the acceptability is to deny lesbianism - i. e., to deny any fundamental challenge to the basis of the female. -For irrespective of where our love and sexual energies flow, if we are male-identified in our heads, we cannot realize our autonomy as human beings."

(from, *The Woman Identified Woman*, by Radicallesbians 1970)

If divorce has increased by one thousand percent, don't blame the women's movement. Blame the obsolete sex roles on which our marriages were based.

Betty Friedan's speech, New York City, January 20, 1974

\$

U. S. Census 2000: White women earned 70 cents for every dollar earned by a White man. Black and Hispanic women earned 85 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterpart. Black men earned \$10,000 less and Hispanic men \$14,000 less than White men.

\$

1961 - President John Kennedy establishes the President's Commission on the Status of Women and appoints Eleanor Roosevelt (a lesbian) as chairwoman. The Commission issues a report in 1963 documenting substantial discrimination against women in the workplace and make recommendations for *fair hiring practices, paid maternity leave, and affordable child care.*

1972 - The Equal Rights Act is passed by Congress and sent to the states for ratification. The amendment reads: "*Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.*"

1982 - The Equal Rights Amendment dies when it failed to achieve ratification by a minimum of 38 states. *No equal pay for equal work for women.*

1992 - The Supreme Court reaffirms *Roe v Wade*, challenging Pennsylvania's 1989 Abortion Control Act, *which sought to reinstate restrictions previously ruled unconstitutional.*

\$

The problem that has no name - which is simply the fact that American women are kept from growing to their full human capacities - is taking a far greater toll on the physical and mental health of our country than any known disease.

Betty Friedan (1921-2006) The Feminine Mystique (1963)

Men in authority will always think that criticism of their policies is dangerous. They will always equate their policies with patriotism, and find criticism subversive.

Henry Steele Commager